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St. *Paul's* HERETIC:

OR, SEVERAL

CHARACTERISTICS

OF AN

HERETIC.

Collected from

St. PAUL's Epiſtle to TITUS:

Addreſs'd to the

Reverend Dr. *STEBBING*,

And the

Reverend Mr. *FOSTER*.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.—— Prove all things: hold faſt that which is good.——

We may therefore pay a due regard to the judgment of a Socrates, *or a* Plato, *but* TRUTH *ſhould always be reverenced by us, with the moſt hearty, and profound ſubmiſſion.*-----

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ST. PAUL'S HERETIC:

OR, A CHARACTERISTICS

OF

HERETIC

Collected from

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES to TITUS;

Addressed to the

BRITISH MUSEUM

LONDON:

St. *Paul's* HERETIC:

OR, SEVERAL

CHARACTERISTICS

OF AN

HERETIC.

GENTLEMEN,

UPON reading the controverſy lately publiſhed between you, concerning the nature of *hereſy*, I was determined to ſit down and read St. *Paul*, and from him form a judgment of it, in the beſt manner I could; being perſuaded that St. *Paul* bids fairer to ſet me right in the ſenſe of his own writings, than any commentator whatſoever: at leaſt, I thought I could with more ſatisfaction form my ideas from St. *Paul*, than from any other inferiour authority. What light I could come at in thus endeavouring to underſtand what he meant by an *heretic*, I have diſcovered in the following me-

thod, which I humbly ſubmit to your conſideration.

My deſign is to conſider what St. *Paul* in his epiſtle to *Titus* intends by an HERETIC; as mentioned by him *Tit.* iii. 10. And I think it denotes, that there were ſome perſons in the world, which in the eſtimation of St. *Paul* deſerved ſuch a character, *viz.* that of an *heretic*, otherwiſe, his advice following theſe words, would appear to have been very impertinent.

Again, I take it for granted, that the apoſtle muſt intend *ſomething* by this character, as applied by him to ſome particular perſons; but this his intention, I apprehend, could not be underſtood even by *Titus* himſelf, either from this verſe, or the next, unleſs he had more explicitely explain'd himſelf before in his letter; and indeed the very form of the diction here uſed, implies as much, "a "man that is an *heretic*, after the firſt "and ſecond admonition reject, knowing "that an *heretic* is ſubverted, and ſinneth, "being condemned of himſelf." Which ſtrongly refers to a character already explained, and marked out; otherwiſe, the deſcription and advice appear to be very defective, and impertinent.

I ſhall therefore endeavour to find out the preciſe meaning of St. *Paul* about an *heretic* from the foregoing parts of this epiſtle of his to *Titus*, firmly believing that the occaſion of ſuch kind of diſcipline, which he here recommends *Titus* unto, muſt be well explain'd by him, before he would give ſuch advice: as knowing it would no way agree with the prudence and caution of St. *Paul* that he ſhould proceed, in ſo abrupt, and unintelligible a manner.

Having read over this epiſtle, I find that the grand deſign of it is, to detect and cenſure the conduct of ſome *Jewiſh zealots*; and to direct *Titus* what doctrines he ſhould teach, and how he ſhould behave, ſo as to fruſtrate the ill deſigns, and meaſures of theſe men, whom he at laſt brands with the infamous, but juſt character of *heretic*: from which we may perhaps learn, what are thoſe particular marks, which unite in making up this black character.

The apoſtle tells *Titus* [a] that there were many in *Crete* who attempted all they could to corrupt the chriſtian converts from the ſimplicity of the goſpel inſtitution; teaching them to lay the greateſt ſtreſs on exact and nice diſtinctions of

[a] *Tit.* i. 10, 11.

meats,

meats, and drinks; [a] asserting, that *holiness* and *purity* absolutely depend on such observances: and this they did, under the guise and pretence of *extraordinary knowledge*; something like infallibility; [b] for they professed to know God, *i. e.* to be his only people, favour'd with a full and certain knowledge of his will; at the same time that both their temper, and conduct, uniformly gave the *lie* to this their profession; for by their works they shew'd that they had no such knowledge; being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate, *i. e.* stupid, or injudicious in it: which character the *apostle* makes to appear, by afterwards observing, that these very men taught, that the *christian institution* dissolved, and broke every civil and natural obligation, arising from the relation the christian stood in to others who were of different religious sentiments; and therefore it is, that the apostle directs TITUS to speak those things which became sound doctrine, advising to every social and relative duty: [c] that he should exhort christian servants, or slaves [d] to be equally obedient, and faithful to *heathen masters*, as they would be to *christian masters*; that hereby the chri-

[a] Ver. 14, 15, 16. [b] Ver. 16. [c] Ch. ii. 1,—7. [d] Ch. ii. 9.

stian

ſtian doctrine might appear in its genuine light, as an equal, reaſonable, and uſeful inſtitution. On the ſame account, I apprehend it is, that he bids *Titus* put the chriſtian people in mind, that chriſtianity did not diſſolve, or weaken that *ſubjection* which the reaſon of things, and the juſt laws of ſociety require to princes, and magiſtrates; but that it demanded of all its true diſciples, a due regard to every civil obligation, by which the harmony, and good order of ſociety is ſupported; inſomuch, as that they ſhould not ſpeak evil of, or revile *any man*; no, not *an inferiour*, becauſe he was of different ſentiments from themſelves; but on the contrary, [b] that they ſhould treat all men, with *all meekneſs*, and *gentleneſs*, as what was abſolutely incumbent on every ſincere profeſſor of chriſtianity; and then he goes on to ſhew, that a contrary temper and conduct could only ſuit with ſuch a ſtate of ignorance, and vice, from which the chriſtian revelation had effectually delivered ſuch of them, who were become ſincere converts: [c] to which evil diſpoſitions, ſuch as malice, envy, and hatred, many of them had been ſubject, (even himſelf alſo as a perſecutor) before they embraced

[a] Chap. iii. [b] Verſe 2. [c] Chap. iii. 3.

chriſti-

chriſtianity. He then adds, [a] that the great, and evident deſign of chriſtianity, was, not only to recover mankind from ſuch vices; but alſo to diſcover to them, that every *external diſtinction* is inſignificant, and uſeleſs, and can no way recommend men to the divine acceptance: but on the contrary that their being made *heirs* according to the hope of eternal life, thro' the mercy of God, depended on their being careful to *maintain good works*; [b] or as it is before expreſs'd, on their being conducted by a *gentle*, and *meek temper* towards all men. He then adviſeth them, to avoid and reject all fooliſh queſtions, *i. e.* ſuch as belong not to the chriſtian ſcheme, but are abſolutely repugnant to it; and ſuch were all thoſe of theſe *zealots*, which reſpected *only* the *Jewiſh* traditions, pedigrees, and ceremonies; the natural tendency of which, was to raiſe contentions and ſtrifes, contrary to the known laws of natural religion, and therefore could not but be ſubverſive of the deſigns of real and pure chriſtianity. Having thus pointed out theſe dangerous men in the church of *Crete*, and adviſed *Titus* how to guard againſt them, he proceeds to fix a ſtigma on ſuch men,

[a] Verſe 4, 5, 6, 7. [b] Ver. 8.

under

under one ſingle, but general appellation, A MAN THAT IS AN HERETIC; *i. e.* "a man, or any man in your church at "*Crete*, that deſerves ſuch a character, "which I have ſo largely deſcribed, and "given you rules to guard yourſelf, and "others againſt; admoniſh ſuch a man: "but if after a ſecond earneſt applica-"tion to him, he yet retains this wicked, "this hurtful diſpoſition, reject him as "one unfit for chriſtian ſociety; and you "may very ſafely do it, becauſe ſuch a "one is evidently *an enemy* to all that is "good, and cannot belong to God's fa-"mily in the relation of a child; for he "profeſſedly, and allowedly unreins every "hurtful paſſion, and conducts himſelf on "the moſt deſtructive principles: thus he "ſinneth, as one that is born of God "cannot ſin, and is condemned of him-"ſelf." Nor can the apoſtle conclude his epiſtle but by keeping his eye ſteady on this heretic, to which character he had all along had a reference, for al-tho' one might have expected, that he had clos'd his deſign of adviſing about theſe hurtful men; eſpecially when he begins, as it were, his poſtſcript, which is only a relation of whom he would ſend to *Crete*, in order to give *Titus* leave and opportunity to come and pay him a viſit

at *Nicopolis*, and a direction given *Titus*, whom he ſhould bring along with him; juſt as if St. *Paul* could not pronounce his *valediction*, till he had again returned to his ſubject, he repeats the advice; and, *let* OURS *alſo learn to maintain good works.* The conjunction copulative (*and*) can have no reference at all to the verſes immediately preceding, or the ſubject of them, *viz.* directions to *Titus* about his journey; but as if theſe were only a parentheſis: in the mind of St. *Paul*, we ſhall find that the *and* had there a ſtrong reference: *q. d.* " *Titus* if thou haſt any " reſpect for me, or would ſee me with " pleaſure, fail not to attempt to ſecure " the grand end of this my letter to thee, " *viz.* by exhorting ſuch chriſtians as are " in any danger of being deluded by theſe " heretics, that they learn to maintain " good works, *i. e.* be conſtant in the " exerciſe of an *undiſtinguiſhed beneficence* " towards others, on all needful occaſions; " being merciful, as their Father in hea- " ven is merciful; and not ſuffering their " *good will* to become limited, and con- " fin'd to particular ſentiments and par- " ties; leſt the righteous judge of men " ſhould eſteem them to belong to the

[a] Chap. iii. 12, 13. [b] Verſe 14.

" un-

" unfruitful or unprofitable: the favour of
" God be with you all. Amen."

Having thus briefly trac'd and explain'd the deſign of St. *Paul* in this epiſtle, more immediately as it reſpected the character under conſideration, I ſhall in the next place more diſtinctly delineate, or rather copy out the *heretic* from St. *Paul*'s original,

Firſt, By ſhewing what are his falſe; and, *ſecondly*, what are his true and genuine characteriſtics.

And, *firſt*, for any one man to receive different ideas, or form different ſentiments from another, upon any ſpeculative principle, is no part of the deſcription of St. *Paul*'s heretic: nor indeed can it be, becauſe whatever propoſition is found concerning which men may receive different ideas, or form different ſentiments, that propoſition has nothing in itſelf that can determine any one man *faulty* more than another; inſomuch, as it will admit of ſuch variety, among ſincere and honeſt enquirers after the true meaning of it; for ſince men may differ upon a common ratio, *i. e.* as having different degrees of ſtrength, and clearneſs in their intelligent faculties, and as having for the ſubject of enquiry, a *propoſition*, which in its own nature will admit of different appre-

 henſions

sentions about it; it hence follows, that that difference is occasion'd by, and consequently may be defended upon that common ratio. For instance, *six* men having received *six* different ideas of the nature of a proposition, if these *six* were careful in forming their sentiments, they are equally right; altho' none of them should happen to find out the true nature of the proposition. Or supposing that some *one* of the *six* should happen to have formed his sentiments so as to quadrate exactly with the truth of the proposition, yet since the proposition was capable of different ideas, and every one of the *six* formed the best sentiments they could about it, the different and distinct ideas of the *erring five* would be of equal value *to them*; as his ideas could be *to him* who happened right. Nor does such a proposition leave the least room for any *one* of the *six* to condemn his differing companion for that his difference, it being the unavoidable consequence of his enquiry: but each individual has equal authority to censure the sentiment that differs from his own; because *number one*, differs from *number two*, as much as *number two*, differs from *number one*, and so of the rest.

Let

Let me add, that the conſent of *ten thouſand* to the truth of a propoſition, don't determine any one *ſingle diſſenter* to be an *heretic*; nor will a general Opinion, be any proof of the truth of a propoſition; *numbers* adding no weight to truth, for truth is but one, and is unalterable, and yet may be miſtaken by ten thouſand, as well as by one individual.

Neither, *ſecondly*, can he be an *heretic*, who diſſents from the truth of any propoſition, altho' of the *greateſt importance* in itſelf, and when rightly underſtood; if the man ſo diſſenting be of a benevolent temper, and conducts himſelf virtuouſly: becauſe, the value of any principle is only proportionate to the tendency it has to promote a benevolent temper, and a virtuous conduct. For inſtance, no principle can be of greater importance than this, *viz.* that inherent, or perſonal holineſs is abſolutely neceſſary to happineſs: and yet there are ſome who abſolutely deny this; and ſay, that it is no qualification at all: but that *Chriſt Jeſus* is imputatively made ſanctification or holineſs to all ſuch as are ſaved, and that it is dangerous to regard perſonal obedience: at the ſame time ſome of theſe very men don't act in, but out of principle, and conduct themſelves in ſuch a manner, as if *perſonal holineſs* was the *only* prerequiſite

site to salvation: from hence I think, we may fairly infer, that a mere dissent from the truth of a proposition, altho' of the greatest importance, will not determine any man an *heretic*.

But, again, *orthodoxy* is generally connected with *power*, and therefore it is, that *establishments* have took place; *i.e.* some certain *tenets*, or *doctrines* have been recommended under the *ban* of *publick authority*, as *a common standard of truth*; to differ from which, some men have branded as *heresy*, and treated the dissenter as if he was an *heretic*. But surely nothing can be more absurd, nor can it take place in any breast, one would think, but where an uncommon ignorance, and an excess of folly characterises the man; for let any man but examine the history of any nation, or age of the world, and he'll soon see, that *power* and *dominion* can add no real value to any principle, or alter in the least the nature of truth; because if it could, one tenet might be a truth in *England*, the contrary of which at the very *same time*, and under the very *same authority*, is a truth in *Scotland*: one tenet may be a *truth* at *Rome*, which is absolutely *a lie* in *England*, as well as false in the nature of things. So that if *establishment* added any

any thing to the nature of truth, or the reason of things, the old gentleman at *Rome* might then, indeed, make a wafer into a God for ought I know, *i. e.* if the reason of things would bow the knee, and give way to authority: but, alas! the pretence is only a piece of artificial colouring,— for truth is invariable, and inflexible in its nature; so that *power* and *dominion* cannot at all influence it, nor will it admit the least alteration from any *authority* whatsoever. On the other hand, I own, that truth is much more likely to be *disguised* and *corrupted* by *power*, and *authority*, then when unassisted and unbiassed by these, it is safe to make its way in the world: because, *authority* and *power* give the greatest opportunity to favour any *designs* which men may have, arising from *interests* and *views* wholly foreign to those of truth. And thus it has always been with mankind; for, where *power* and *dominion* have undertook to support principles of any kind, there has always been an invasion made on the rights of men; but never any impartial proceedings in favour of the sincere, and disinterested enquirer. Nor can it be otherwise, because *authority*, and *power* have always thrown into the balance some *advantages* in favour of those

ſchemes which that *power* and *authority* have eſtabliſhed: and not only ſo, but as if men were moſt earneſt for ſupporting ſuch authority, *diſcouragements* have been always added; apparently on purpoſe to ſuppreſs ſuch *enquiries* as were likely to ſhake, or diſturb the foundation of ſuch eſtabliſhed articles, or tenets.—— Hence it appears to me, that merely to diſſent from the truth of any eſtabliſhed principles, becauſe eſtabliſhed by any humane authority, will not prove a man an heretic.

Laſtly, a man's being rejected, *i. e.* excluded, or excommunicated from any chriſtian communion, will not prove him an heretic; no, not if he was ſo excluded by *Titus*, or any other biſhop, or even by St *Paul* himſelf; except the perſon ſo excluding him had undoubted evidence, that the man ſo excluded, was ſubverted, and ſinned, and was condemned of himſelf; for ſuch a knowledge the apoſtle has made the juſtifying reaſon of *Titus*'s rejecting an heretic; *knowing*, ſays he, that he that is ſuch, *i. e.* that is an heretic, and as ſuch, one whom thou mayeſt reject, *knowing* that ſuch an one is ſubverted, and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf. Nor is there any thing appears more evident to me from hence, than that an *heretic* cannot

be one whom God can approve: because no man can justly be denominated an heretic, or rejected from christian communion, as such; but one who is an undoubted enemy to truth and virtue. Hence therefore I conclude, that it is not in the power of any man, or any set of men, to make or constitute a man an heretic, by excluding him their communion: and hence I infer also, that the *Greek* word, render'd *condemned of himself*, cannot signify *one that accuses himself*, and is, or may be accused of the church, as an heretic, at the same time he may not be one in the sight of God; except we must call every innocent, sincere, and good man an *heretic*, who has had the misfortune to become a sacrifice to the pride and villainy of imperious and wicked ecclesiastics: of which unhappy number, we may reckon all those who have been *confessors* and *martyrs* to the cause of truth and virtue; whose deaths have stained the history of so many blood-thirsty priests and princes. This cannot then be the true sense of the Words; but must intend one whom *Titus knew* to be *self-condemned*; *i. e.* knew to be one, who could have no confidence towards God. Which *knowledge* of the hearts of men might probably be one

of thoſe extraordinary gifts confin'd to the apoſtolic age.——

Having thus far given a deſcription of the falſe characteriſtics of St. *Paul*'s heretic, I ſhall, in the *ſecond* place, point out ſome of the true and genuine ones.

And, *firſt*, An *heretic* is one who profeſſeth ſuch principles, and then practiſeth upon them, which the reaſon of things, and the law of his own mind, muſt condemn; for inſtance, that man is an heretic who profeſſeth to believe, that the revelation of *Jeſus Chriſt* is from God, and yet aſſerts that that revelation lays more ſtreſs upon a man's obſerving ritual, and ceremonial diſtinctions in meats and drinks, or any other indifferent things, than upon the eternal laws of *juſtice* and *benevolence*. Thus St. *Paul*'s *heretic* is deſcribed as having ſuch a regard to the *Jewiſh* tables, reſpecting ſuch things as theſe, as was prior to all other conſiderations which relate to holineſs of heart and life, *Tit.* i. 14, 15. This indeed muſt leſſen the importance of every ſentiment we can form of the perfections of Deity, and confound the reaſon, and difference of things; but can no way conſiſt with any reaſonable diſquiſition.——

Secondly, An *heretic* is that man, who from a pretenſion of his being *elected*, or

chosen of God to eternal life, asserts an *unbounded liberty* to practise every vice; inasmuch, as such a man, cannot but know, the supreme Being is a *perfectly regular Being*, who observes inviolably the laws of *justice* and *mercy*; and that consequently, a conduct so repugnant to those perfections of Deity, cannot be any proof of God's favour towards him, or approbation of him, but the very reverse; on account of which consideration, he must needs be condemned of himself.

Thirdly, An *heretic* is one who pretends to acknowledge the *christian scheme* as a part of divine revelation, and yet asserts both by doctrine and practice, that it can dispense with those obligations which arise from the relations in which we stand to other beings. So St. *Paul's heretic* taught, that *servants* might refuse fidelity to their *masters*, if those their masters were of a different religion from the christian, as may be learnt from *Tit.* ii. 9, 10. by which documents they would have exposed the noblest plan of religion in the world to the utmost contempt: and not only so, but they taught also, that the christian might refuse allegiance and subjection to his *sovereign*

[a] *Tit.* i. 16.

prince, or *governour*; [a] hereby introducing an idea of christianity as a most hurtful scheme to the weal of society.

Nay, I add, St. *Paul's heretic* was one who taught men to speak evil of dignities; and to treat all men, of every class who differ'd from them, with *malice*, *envy*, and *hatred*; [b] which conduct is an evident contradiction not only to the law of *Jesus*, but to the plain reason and nature of things also: and consequently, such a man must deserve the character St. *Paul* gives him, to wit, that of an heretic; since he is apparently *subverted*, *i. e.* overturned, or in a state of ruin and destruction; sinning with such an high hand, as to leave no room for any man to doubt, but that he is condemned of himself.

Again, St. *Paul's heretics* were such who pretended to recommend their hurtful doctrines and practices under the mask of *a knowledge of God*, and acquaintance with his will; as may be learnt also from chap. i. 16. at the same time both their temper, and conduct prov'd, that they were wholly *untaught* or unskilful in the ways of virtue. And, indeed, this has been that too successful

[a] *Tit.* iii. 1. [b] Ver. 2, 3.

device

device in all ages, whereby *herefy* has made its way among the vitious, and ignorant. But how preposterous is it, for men to pretend that they *know God*, and understand his will, and are fit to instruct others in the nature of truth and virtue; when neither truth, nor virtue can be discovered to have the least place or interest in their minds, or views? but on the contrary, they appear to be abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate! Would to God that men would shake off every prejudice to which they are thus enslav'd, and that they would judge of things according to their reason, and fitness, and not suffer the haughty, the imperious, the avaricious PRIEST to perswade them, that *persecution*; *i.e.* pecuniary mulcts, *&c.* or *massacres* and *slaughters* can afford assistance to the cause of *truth*; or should ever be esteem'd any real friends to the interest of *virtue*: but that the reverse is undoubtedly true, *viz.* that whosoever inculcates such *doctrines* are absolute strangers to the spirit and genius of Christianity, and are all the while offering sacrifice to BAAL, and not to GOD!

Finally, St. *Paul's heretic*, must have been a *very wicked man*, even an *obstinate, hardened wretch*, enslav'd to vitious

pas-

passions, and appetites, yea, become perfectly callous to, and unimpressive by every rational and kind admonition: *an heretic after the second admonition reject; knowing*, &c. And indeed, nothing less than this can be intended, if we consider, that every member of society has a right to the benefits, and privileges of such society of which he is a member; unless, or until he has forfeited that right, by violating those cardinal laws on which the good order of the society is supported: the cardinal laws on which christianity is supported, is those of *charity*, and *justice* or *righteousness*: but the law of charity and justice too must have been violated by *Titus*, if he had censured, and rejected a man as an *heretic*, of whose insincerity and dishonesty he had the least reason to doubt; for this christian law, or principle, influences its subjects to *suffer long*, and *to be kind*, — *to think no evil*, — *to hope all things*, — to

To make it more fully appear that nothing less than allowed and obstinate wickedness could characterize the *heretic*, I would observe, in the *first place*, that it could not be on account of the man's *prejudices*, or *prepossessions*, that *Titus* was to reject him; for then this would not only have been repugnant to the mild

and

and forbearing ſpirit of chriſtianity, but alſo very reverſe, and contradictory to the conduct of St. *Paul* himſelf, who circumciſed *Timothy*, [a] and came into ſeveral other very great conceſſions; becoming *all things*, to *all men* that he might win them over by benevolence, cool reaſoning, and a proper degree of complaiſance to thoſe their prejudices: theſe were the methods he himſelf took to looſe and untie the chains and cords with which men were bound, and never pretended to apply rigorous, or ſevere meaſures to remove them.

Much leſs, *ſecondly*, (as has been already obſerv'd,) could it be a mere difference in ſentiment that could warrant ſuch diſcipline which St. *Paul* adviſes *Titus* unto. No; the *apoſtle* could not but know better, being well aſſur'd that not one religious ſociety could be form'd on any plan, either by himſelf, or any other, but there would yet remain a variety of ſentiments among the members that compoſed it, pretty near equal to its numbers.

I might further remark, that altho' in the *New Teſtament*, *hereſy* is a word made uſe of to ſignify *ſect*, yet whenever it is ſo uſed merely to denominate a *ſect*, or

[a] *Acts* xvi. 3.

party,

party, it is no noxious thing, nor in the leaſt culpable: ſo far from this, that St. *Paul* in 1 *Cor.* xi. 19. expreſly allows, that there muſt be *ſects*, or *hereſies* among chriſtians: and that a valuable *end* was to be anſwered thereby, *viz.* (*i. e.* as I underſtand it) that men may approve themſelves true chriſtians, by exerciſing that nobleſt *virtue* or *fruit* of the *ſpirit*, *viz. love*, or *charity* towards every differing brother. Beſides, if *hereſy* was of an ill ſignification in the uſage of the *New Teſtament*, then chriſtianity was whilſt in its minority a noxious or hurtful thing alſo: for St. *Paul* ſays, that after the way which the world called hereſy, ſo he worſhipped the God of his Fathers, *i. e.* as belonging to the ſect of the *Nazarenes*, and in this his *hereſy*, or difference in ſentiment from the *eſtabliſhed religion* of his country, he gloried! Therefore, I take it for granted that the apoſtle muſt intend by an *heretic* in his epiſtle to *Titus*, nothing leſs than *a very wicked man*; or, one that was become unfit, by his wickedneſs for *chriſtian communion*, of which he profeſſed himſelf a member.

I ſhall in the next place, briefly enquire which way he was to reject, or, what is intended by TITUS's *rejecting* this *heretic*.

And,

And, *first*, *Titus* could not be directed to *reject* the heretic, by making the *terms* of chriſtian communion *narrower* than what would agree with the grand deſign of chriſtianity, which is a ſcheme of doctrines intended to include all nations, people, and languages, and to become an univerſal bleſſing to mankind; for the very excellency of this *inſtitution* conſiſts in its being calculated to cement ſocieties, and to ſtrengthen and ſpread friendſhips, ſo that the terms, on which it can reject any, can be only ſuch on which men will be abſolutely excluded the happineſs of the *after ſtate*; to prepare for which happineſs this inſtitution is in its whole œconomy peculiarly adapted. How prepoſterous then muſt it be for any chriſtian to teach, that any man is diſqualified, and ſhould thereupon be excluded chriſtian communion and fellowſhip here on earth, on account of ſome *punctilio's*, or *pretended reaſons*, which heaven won't inſiſt on as reaſons or terms on which it will exclude any? One would think that this is to carry the point to an extravagant pitch of purity in diſcipline, and implicitly to condemn the care, the purity and regularity of the upper world.—Whereas nothing is more plain, than that the laws of admiſſion in the church below ought

to be more lax, in proportion as men's capacities of diſtinguiſhing *ſincerity* from *hypocriſy* differ from the enlarged underſtanding of him who has the keys of the inviſible world;—— men being capable of judging of one another here, no further than that rule of our Saviour's will direct them, *viz. By their fruits ye ſhall know them.*

Nor, *ſecondly*, could St. *Paul* mean, by adviſing *Titus* to reject the *heretic*, that he ſhould exterminate, or extirpate the *heretic:* I know it is ſaid in *Mat.* vii. 19. *That every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, men eſteem as only fit for fuel;*—— from whence ſome may infer the fineſs of an inquiſition. But I fancy we ſhall ſoon find, upon a little enquiry, that the metaphor will not bear ſuch a tranſition; nor that the church ever did or could receive ſuch *authority* from Chriſt, from which they might juſtify an extermination of heretics, altho' *obſtinate vice* enters into their character.—— In order to ſettle this point with greater certainty, let us examine what *Jeſus Chriſt* has elſewhere expreſly taught his diſciples; and methinks there is no ſcripture more pertinent and *à propos*, than the parable he delivered concerning the *tares*, *Mat.* xiii. in which he repreſents his *doctrine* as the *good ſeed*

that

that *he* had ſown in the field of the world, which turned many to righteouſneſs, or ſprung up ſo, as to denominate it a field that he had ſown; but the *tares* as the *ſeed* ſown by the Devil; *i. e. wicked men* not regarding his doctrine.—He tells us that ſome of his over-officious ſervants, who knew not of what ſpirit they were of, when they ſaw the *tares* among the *wheat* came to him, and ſaid, SIR, Wilt thou then that we go, and gather (or root) them up? To which their *wiſe* and *righteous maſter* replied, No; by no means, leſt whilſt ye gather up the *tares*, or what you take to be ſo, you root up the *wheat* alſo with them; let both grow together, or in the ſame field, till *harveſt*, and in the *time of harveſt*, I will direct the *reapers*, both how to ſeparate them, and then how to diſpoſe of them, when ſeparated:—which affords this plain inſtruction, *viz.* That the ſtate of Chriſt's church, whilſt here on earth, has no *reaping time* belonging to any period of it: the general reſurrection, or end of the world, is the *harveſt for reaping*, but begins not till then. It teaches us alſo, that Chriſt intended not to employ any of his *apoſtles*, or *ſucceeding miniſters*, in the work of *boughing*, or *weeding of tares*; both *wheat* and *tares* are to grow together

till *harveſt*. Neither has *Chriſt* qualified any men whatſoever for the work; *apoſtles*, as well as others, might pluck up the *wheat* with the *tares*: *leſt whilſt ye gather up the tares, ye root up alſo the wheat with them.* It further informs us, that the buſineſs or work of *ſeparating*, with its conſequences, is allotted for the *angels*, who are to be the *reapers*; and to whom *he* will *himſelf* give proper inſtructions. Hence I think it is plain, that *extermination* or *extirpation* is not intended by *rejection*.—But poſitively, it can only intend an excluſion from *church-fellowſhip*, whilſt he, i. e. the *heretic*, continued impenitently wicked; but as in the caſe of the *inceſtuous perſon*, whom St. *Paul* had order'd to be excommunicated out of the *church of Corinth*, in like manner ſhould he be treated, for as ſoon as he diſcover'd his penitency, St. *Paul* becomes his advocate, and pleads not only that the church would forgive him, but that they would alſo expreſs due care to *comfort* him, leſt his *ſorrow* ſhould preſs too hard upon him, and *Satan* get thereby an advantage, *i. e.* leſt he ſhould loſe the command of his paſſion, or the exerciſe of his reaſon, and fall into deſpair: in which circumſtances

every rational address might have been lost upon him?

I confess I cannot deny, but that St. *Paul*'s heretic, as described by him, might make himself the head of a party with a vile design, or from base ends, such as wordly interest, &c. according to *Tit.* i. 11. *Teaching things which he ought not for filthy lucre's sake.* But I rather think, that altho' this gives us the *spring*, and *motive* of his action, yet it does not fully convey to us an idea of the make, constitution and frame of the man, so described by St. *Paul* as an *heretic*: nevertheless, lust of riches, or power, and dominion, enter so far into the character of an *heretic*, that I question whether it is possible for any man to deserve the character, that is not actuated by these, as the grand principles of his action: so that wherever such vices prevail in any man, that man is to be suspected as having the *fundamentals* of an heretic.[a]

From the whole, I would conclude, that an *heretic*, if there be any such among christians now, is one, who would wickedly impose or practise upon any scheme, subversive of the right of private judgment, and destructive of the welfare of

[a] Compare 1 *Cor.* v. with 2 *Cor.* ii.

society.

ſociety. And, indeed, where men boldly aſſert their ſentiments to be infallibly right, and condemn all ſuch as differ from them; theſe bid fair for the character, inaſmuch as they lay a ſufficiently wide foundation for the induction of every evil and hurtful diſpoſition and practice.

Whoever therefore would *merit* the character St. *Paul* gives of an heretic; let him indulge to ill-nature, anger, paſſion, pride, and hatred; let him treat his fellow creatures who differ from him with fury, and reſentment; let him reſolve to abridge every man of his liberty who thinks not as he does; and let him reject any ſuch, *i. e.* expel him from his religious ſociety, as a *ſchiſmatic*, altho' he expreſſes in a ſtrong light the *temper* and *virtues* of the chriſtian character; yea, let him curtail, at leaſt, if not further perſecute him in his property: thus ſhall he richly deſerve the title of *heretic*, and become a fit object of the contempt of every ſincere and genuine diſciple of *Jeſus*.

But on the contrary, if any man would *avoid* the character of an heretic, let him be clothed with humility, let him always expreſs a *gentle* and *meek diſpoſition* towards all men; not daring to cenſure, condemn, or perſecute for the ſake of difference in ſentiment; but as becomes a true chriſtian,

let

let him keep the unity of the ſpirit in, or by the bond of peace: being convinced, that the *unity of the ſpirit* is to be kept no other ways, than by the exerciſe of univerſal charity and benevolence; that *uniformity of worſhip*, has never yet ſecured the unity of the ſpirit, nor never will; and that *unanimity in ſentiments* is too idle a dream, to have ever yet obtained any certain exiſtence, among any ſort of religioniſts: but as he ſees that it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that theſe ſhould ſecure the unity of the ſpirit, let him practiſe upon the method revelation has preſcribed, that is, by ſecuring the *bond*, *cement*, or *tie* of a peaceable or benevolent diſpoſition, which, whoever expreſſes, cannot be an *heretic*, becauſe he in reality keeps *the unity of the ſpirit*.

Laſtly, I apprehend that more eſpecially the principles of the ROMISH CHURCH, her *maxims*, and her *ſpirit* exactly tally with St. *Paul's* heretic.—Let then every true chriſtian, as he would adorn the doctrine of *God his Saviour*, avoid her as a ſubverted, ſinning, and ſelf-condemned communion.—And endeavour to ſupport the intereſt of PROTESTANTISM, which is the intereſt of true chriſtian liberty, by conſtantly breathing the ſpirit of the goſpel, and giving proof of it

to

to all men, by an unbounded benevolence.

And now, GENTLEMEN, having given you the beſt account of a *heretic* I could collect from St. *Paul*'s letter to *Titus*, I humbly beg leave as a concluſion, to offer one word of advice; which is this, that ſince you are both publickly employ'd in recommending the doctrines of chriſtianity to mankind, that you would conſtantly diſcover in all your debates, that *truth* and *virtue* are your chief aim; and that your higheſt ambition is to emulate in benevolence: for *pride*, *arrogance*, or a *luſt of dominion* over the judgments, or conſciences of men, are ſuch vices that wherever they are diſcovered, will betray a *ſpirit* unacquainted with the genius of the chriſtian inſtitution. Therefore as you wiſh well to the true intereſt of chriſtianity, and would not ſhare the character of heretics yourſelves, ſpeak no evil one of another; but be gentle, ſhewing *all-meekneſs* unto all men: and ſo far as this temper governs your views, and actions, all *good men* will wiſh you proſperity; as well as he ſincerely does, who is,

GENTLEMEN,

Your Humble Servant,

PHILALEUTHEROS.

FINIS.